



ISRAEL ARMY STEPS UP GROUND OFFENSIVE IN GAZA STRIP

Israel's army pressed ground operations across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, urging Palestinians to flee an offensive in Hamas-ruled Rafah city

PALESTINIAN TOLL IN GAZA'S WAR PASSES 50,000

More than 50,000 Palestinians have officially been declared to have been killed in the war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the territory's Health Ministry said on Sunday, even as new Israeli airstrikes killed at least 26 Palestinians overnight, including a top Hamas political leader and several women and children | P9

'ISRAEL'S PLANS VIOLATE GLOBAL LAWS'

■ Israel's Cabinet approved a proposal to set up a new directorate for advancing "voluntary departure" of Palestinians in line with Donald Trump's proposal to depopulate Gaza
■ Palestinians say they don't want to leave, and rights groups say Israel's proposal amounts violation of international law

NEW SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK TO BE CREATED BY ISRAEL

Do not dispose of phone or tamper with data, HC CJ tells judge Varma

SHEKHAR SINGH @ New Delhi

DELHI High Court Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya has instructed Justice Yashwant Varma not to dispose of his mobile phone(s) or delete, modify, or tamper with any conversations, messages, or data. The directive conveyed through a formal letter dated March 21 follows an order from Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna, emphasising the need to preserve evidence.

In a subsequent letter addressed to the CJI, Chief Justice Upadhyaya said he had requested the Delhi Police commissioner to furnish call detail records (CDR) and internet protocol detail records (IPDR) of Justice Varma's mobile phone for the past six months.

"The call detail records have



Justice Yashwant Varma

been received and are being forwarded in a pen drive along with this letter. As for the IPDR, the same shall be provided as soon as it is received from the Commissioner of Police, Delhi, or the relevant mobile service provider," the letter stated.

The letter stated that a formal request had been made to the DCP (Security) to obtain details of personal security officers and security personnel stationed at Justice Varma's

residence over the last six months. Once received, these records would be duly submitted.

The developments come in the wake of a fire that broke out at Justice Varma's residence on Tughlaq Road on the night of March 14, leading to the discovery of currency notes in a storeroom inside the judge's official residence.

Justice Varma, on his part, has dismissed the allegations and termed them "a conspiracy to tarnish" his reputation.

In a written response to Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya on March 22, Justice Varma stated, "... No cash was ever placed in that storeroom either by me or any of my family members. The suggestion that one would store cash in a commonly-used storeroom verges on the incredible and incredulous."

Reservation based on religion is against Constitution: Hosabale

RSS general secretary says it is only allowed for backward classes within a religion

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI & RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ B'uru / New Delhi

AMID the controversy over the Karnataka government's decision to introduce a 4% reservation for Muslims in government contracts and projects, RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale said on Sunday that the move is untenable as the Constitution does not allow religion-based quota.

"Reservation based on religion is not possible; it is possible only for backward classes within a religion," he said.

On the Karnataka government's decision to bring in a quota for Muslim contractors, Hosabale said such attempts were made earlier by Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, but

those were futile as high courts set aside the decisions.

"Religion-based reservation is not accepted in the Constitution authored by Babasaheb Ambedkar. Anybody doing it is going against the architect of our Constitution," he added.

The remarks by Hosabale, who holds the second-highest position in the Sangh hierarchy, were made in Bengaluru after the conclusion

of the three-day annual Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, which serves as the highest decision-making body of the RSS.

On the demand of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal to remove the tomb of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in Maharashtra, he regretted that Aurangzeb who was against the ethos of Indian culture is being idolised. "Aurangzeb's brother

Dara Shikoh was not made an icon. Are we going to move forward by idolising someone who has gone against the ethos of India or are we going to go with those who worked according to the traditions of this land? Aurangzeb doesn't sit well here, but his brother does," he said.

On the Karnataka government's resolution pressing the Centre to allocate grants for Scheduled Castes / Tribes in proportion to their population, he said any move for the betterment of society is welcome.

Responding to a question on whether the RSS considers the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as its achievement, he said the shrine is the achievement of the Hindu society as a whole.

HDK TO CLEAR JDS STAND TODAY

Janata Dal (Secular), an NDA ally, is reportedly in a Catch-22 situation as to whether to support Karnataka's 4% quota or not. Sources said Union minister and JDS state president H D Kumaraswamy will make the party's stand clear in New Delhi on Monday. "It is likely that JDS will support the BJP on the quota bill," said a party leader | P4

Kerala BJP bets on Rajeev Chandrasekhar as new chief

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ TPuram

THE BJP has selected former Union minister and businessman Rajeev Chandrasekhar to lead its Kerala unit. The decision was finalised during a meeting chaired by BJP central observer Prahalad Joshi in New Delhi on Saturday, party sources said. The BJP's core committee met in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday to endorse this decision, with attendees including Kerala in-charge Prakash Javadekar and co-in-charge Aparajita Sarangi, MP.

The official announcement is expected on Monday during the state council meeting in Thiruvananthapuram.

On Sunday, Chandrasekhar submitted his nomination before the returning officer, Narayanan Namboothiri, at the BJP headquarters in the state capital. Given that Chandrasekhar is the sole nominee, his election on Monday is expected to be a mere formality. He will succeed K Surendran who served as state president for five years, including two years as interim chief.

By taking Chandrasekhar on board, the BJP is signalling its focus on securing the upper-caste Hindu vote base.

SUNRISERS' Smashing Start

KISHAN MAKES A STATEMENT

After being sidelined from the Indian setup, Ishan Kishan, for his new IPL team, smashed an unbeaten 47-ball 106 helping Sunrisers Hyderabad to 286/6. His first IPL century played a part in Rajasthan Royals falling short by 44 runs



Kishan makes his SRH debut with a ton as his team beats RR. A look...

RECORDS TUMBLE IN HYD

In what is one of the flattest grounds of the IPL, bowlers were taken for a ride in Hyderabad on Sunday. Joshi Archer's 0/76 became the most expensive spell in the history of IPL as four bowlers across sides went over 50 runs

NOOR NAILS IT AT CHEPAUK

One of the most anticipated combinations this season, Afghanistan spinner Noor Ahmad showed why he is going to be lethal for Chennai Super Kings as he took 4/18 in four overs against Mumbai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. His spell helped CSK beat MI by four wickets | P11

Crimes against children rise, over 10 POCSO cases filed every day this year

RAKSHITH GOWDA @ Bengaluru

CRIMES against children in the state have surged, with an average of 10 Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases registered every day in the first two months of 2025.

In 2024, the police registered 8,233 cases of crime against children, an increase from 7,854 cases in 2023. Among these, 4,003 were POCSO cases, marking a 38.89% rise in four years, from 2,882 cases in 2021. Despite the increase in the number of cases, the conviction rate remains low, with only 353 con-

victions out of 13,990 total cases registered in four years (2021-2024).

Worryingly, over 26% of these cases ended in acquittal of the accused (3,682), while 202 were classified as false cases. The disturbing trend continues in 2025, with 348 and 264 POCSO cases registered in January and February respectively.

Crimes against children in the state saw over 7% rise in 2024 compared to 2023, according to police data. Additionally, 23 child marriage cases and 16 child labour cases were reported in the first two months of the year.

According to the State Crime

Records Bureau, under the Children Act, police have registered 105 cases of child labour, 142 under the Juvenile Justice Act, and 152 under the the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2024. Last year, the state also reported 3,768 cases of child kidnapping and abduction.

Child rights activist Vasudev Sharma said, "Increasing number of cases indicates growing awareness about reporting cases, but the punishment for criminals remains low. Most cases of child sexual abuse happen within the family or involve someone known to the victim." P3

EXPRESS READ

Standardised bill for all hospitals soon

New Delhi: The Centre will release a standardised format for hospital bills applicable to clinical establishments, including hospitals, nursing homes, and diagnostic centres. It will require them to provide a clear breakdown of charges incurred by the patient | P7

Pope Francis back home after 5 weeks in hospital

Vatican City: A frail Pope Francis returned to the Vatican on Sunday after a five-week hospitalization for life-threatening double pneumonia, and he made a surprise stop at his favorite basilica on the way home before two months of recovery | P9

Summer scorcher for residents, private water tanker prices soar 100% in B'luru

RISHITA KHANNA @ Bengaluru

AS summer sets in, Bengalureans are facing a double blow — soaring heat and escalating private water tanker prices. Many parts of the city which rely on private tankers for 60-70% of their water needs, are already feeling the pinch as rates have almost doubled.

Even as the residents suffer, state's legislators will enjoy a 100% increase in their salaries, as a Bill passed during the budget session last week will ensure increased emoluments for the netas.

A 6,000-litre tanker, which

cost between Rs 450 and Rs 500 earlier, now costs up to Rs 750-800, an 8,000-litre tanker costs up to Rs 1,000-1,200, while a 12,000-litre tanker cost has surged to Rs 2,200-2,500 from Rs 1,000-1,300 in areas like Varthur, Hennur, Marathahalli, and Whitefield.

Though the BBMP has the authority to regulate prices, officials told *TNIE* that they are not planning to intervene as the rates are "affordable". A BBMP official tried to reason that the increase in prices would force people to use water more responsibly and avoid wastage. P2



Residents of Narayanaswami Layout on JC Road collect water from a BWSSB tanker | SHASHIDHAR GYRAPPA

RARE FIND

ASI discovers 110 megaliths near dam in Kerala

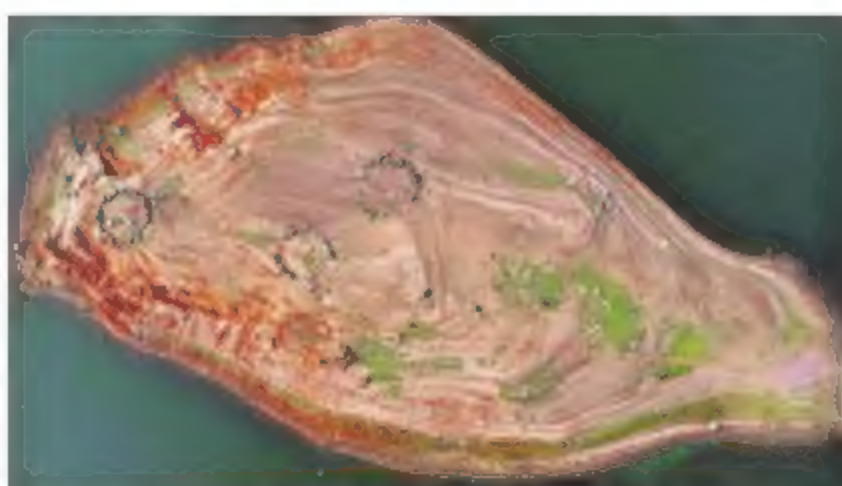
PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

THE Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has stumbled upon a cluster of over 110 megaliths (large stones used to build structures and monuments) near the Malampuzha dam in Palakkad, Kerala, during a recent exploration expedition.

According to ASI officials, the discovery could offer more insights into ancient civilisations and their practices.

Megaliths indicate significant burial sites, ritualistic areas, or places of cultural importance. Megalithic structures were built using large, rough stones without mortar or cement. Such chambers were common during Neolithic and Bronze Ages.

The presence of ancient bur-



The site near Malampuzha Dam in Palakkad where ASI officials found the megalithic structures | ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

ial chambers suggests there could be a large organised settlement at the site and it could shed more light on the region's history.

"Recent explorations near the Malampuzha Dam in Palakkad, Kerala, has led to a discovery of megalithic structures spread across island-like

mounds. The team of ASI surveyed the area and came across more than 110 megaliths spreading across 45 hectares of land," the ASI posted on X.

The ASI said most of the burials are of 'cist' variety — both single and multiple chambered — stone circles, urns, dolmens, and dolmenoids. "These structures are primarily constructed with massive granite slabs and boulders, some also incorporate laterite stones," it added.

Cist graves are small stone-built coffin-like boxes used to hold dead bodies. Megaliths are found across India. Most notable sites include Brahmagiri in Karnataka and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu.

Recently, the ASI discovered a large collection of antiquities at Ratnagiri in Odisha.

Prize catch

The discovery of such a large number of megalithic burials in clusters could provide more insights about the early Iron Age society and belief system in Kerala, ASI officials said. The rich pottery adds depth to the site's cultural story

VIT
CHENNAI

WELCOME TO THE
UNIVERSITY DAY
OF VIT, CHENNAI
25TH MARCH 2025, TUESDAY
CHIEF GUEST

Ms. Katrina Knapp
Vice Consul, Australian Consulate-General, Chennai

GUEST OF HONOUR
Mr. Sudeep Kunnamal
designate Chief Human Resource Officer, Tata Consultancy Services

Dr. G. Viswanathan
FOUNDER & CHANCELLOR
will preside

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